

St Mary's demonstrate attacking power

FULL TEAM, firm surface, balmy evening: St Mary's College demonstrated the pedigree that will make them, potentially, the most dangerous team in the country should they make the AIB League Division One playoffs in April.

Atmospheric conditions should closely resemble those enjoyed at Lansdowne Road last night, where Mary's simply cut their opponents asunder with a performance, characterised by power, pace, vision and superb angles of running.

Lansdowne facilitated the winners with some lacklustre tackling, particularly in the

centre where Kurt McQuilkin and Shane Horgan were notable absentees. Even when the midfield held firm full-back Rory Kearns was surprisingly lethargic in discharging his duties.

But it would be churlish to detract from an excellent Mary's performance that owed much to the return of two long-term injury victims, flanker Trevor Brennan and scrum-half Conor McGuinness.

Both produced superb displays, Brennan was ruthlessly destructive in the tackle but, now, is far from one dimensional.

His hands have improved

ST MARY'S COLL..... 42
LANDSDOWNE 10

John O'Sullivan

immeasurably, highlighted on one occasion with a superb pass in contact, and his reading of the game suggests an intelligence with which he is rarely credited: there is more to Brennan than just big hits.

McGuinness, appeared a little rusty against Young Munster but there were no lingering effects last night.

His distribution was unerring, his vision in exploiting space, both through the boot and on the

run a central factor in victory.

There were other fine performances too, most notably out-half Fergal Campion and centre Gareth Gannon, who prised holes to release those outside.

Up front, captain Steve Jameson led by example, as did the industrious Mark Cuddihy as the pack functioned capably as a unit in providing a platform for their more fleet footed brethren.

In contrast Lansdowne appeared over-worked, undermined by several weak displays and never capable of achieving anything outside of a hard working pack in which Cormac Egan, Stephen Rooney and Colin McEntee grafted to best effect.

Mary's grabbed the initiative on four minutes: a McGuinness break on the Lansdowne 10 metre

line culminating with the excellent John McWeeney bursting down the touchline for a fine score. Campion converted and then kicked two penalties as the visitors threatened an annihilation.

Egan's unconverted try after a fine catch and drive at a lineout 15 metres from the Mary's line offered a brief respite. It took Mary's just two minutes to respond with a well crafted backrow move, Costello, and McGuinness combining to send Kevin Nowlan racing down the shortside and outpacing the cover to seal a fine try.

Campion failed with the conversion and a subsequent penalty but it hardly mattered as St Mary's grabbed a third try before the interval. Brennan blocked

down an attempted clearance and Costello scooped the ball up to canter the 20 metres to the line. This time Campion proved himself more accurate.

The out-half played a central role in the next try on 63 minutes, charging down Richard Governey's kick on halfway which allowed Denis Hickie to cross unchanged. Campion added the extra points. A McEntee try stemmed the Mary's bluewash momentarily but they finished the stronger with two uncovered tries, a second for Hickie and finally, a suitable embellishment on their outstanding collective performance.

The try was conceived deep inside their own half, moved through half-a-dozen pairs of

hands before Jameson, collapsed over the line to round off a highly entertaining evening's viewing for the neutral.

SCORING SEQUENCE: 4 mins: McWeeney try, Campion conversion, 7-0; 7: Campion penalty, 10-0; 16: Campion penalty, 13-0; 24: Egan try, 13-5; 26: Nowlan try, 18-5; 35: Costello try, Campion conversion, 25-5; 63: Hickie try, Campion conversion, 32-5; 67: McEntee try, 32-10; Hickie try, 37-10; 81: Jameson try, 42-10.

ST MARY'S: K Nowlan, J McWeeney, R McIlreavy, G Gannon, D Hickie, F Campion, C McGuinness, E Byrne, B Browne, P Coyle, S Jameson (capt), M Reilly, T Brennan, V Costello, M Cuddihy. **Replacements:** P Power for Browne 25 mins; P Sullivan for Brennan 67 mins; R Ormond for Campion 69 mins.

LANDSDOWNE: R Kearns, M Dillon, B Glennon, Dave O'Mahony, S Cooney, R Governey, David O'Mahony, E Bohan, C Egan, A McKeen, W Aherne, A McCullen, S Rooney (capt), C McEntee, P Mandal. **Replacements:** G Molloy for Mandal 24 mins; A Freeman for Aherne 55 mins; J Woods for Kearns 69 mins. Referee: S Buggy (Leinster).